DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 162 286 CS 004 493

AUTHOR Wooden, Sharon Lee
TITLE Utilizing the Monroe Scales to Evaluate Oral Language.
PUB DATE Oct 78
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Regional Conference of the International Reading Association (7th, Little Rock, Arkansas, October 5-7, 1978); Appendixes A and B removed due to copyright restrictions

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Ability Identification; Child Language; Elementary Education; Informal Assessment; Language Development; *Language Usage; *Rating Scales; Skill Development; *Speech Skills; *Teaching Techniques; *Thought Processes
IDENTIFIERS *Monroe Oral Language Scale; *Oral Language

ABSTRACT

Four scales developed by Marion Monroe for recording, describing, analyzing, and rating children's oral language skills are described and presented in this paper. The skills assessed by the scales are first described as follows: (1) how a child thinks, as revealed by the quality of ideas; (2) how a child thinks, as revealed by definition of words; (3) how a child uses words, as revealed by ability to verbalize ideas; and (4) how a child uses words, as revealed by command of sentence structure. Eighteen activities are then described that will encourage children to expand their vocabularies and express themselves orally. (GW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED162286

Utilizing the Monroe Scales to Evaluate Oral Language

Presented at

Southwest Regional Conference: International Reading Association

October 7, 1978

Sharon Lee Wooden, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Specialties
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sharon Lee Wooden

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

CS004493

Utilizing the Monroe Scales to Evaluate Oral Language

Oral Language skill is the basis of learning to read. Before age six and formal entry into school, children's language experiences are almost entirely with the spoken language: hearing it, associating meaning with it and speaking it. Building on the child's many experiences "languaging", the teacher teaches her pupils to get meaning out of print. How difficult this task is for the teacher and each individual child will depend on the quantity and most importantly the quality of language experiences each child has had previous to entering school. Recognition of the various levels of language ability possessed by the pupils in his/her class gives the teacher the necessary basis for planning a total communication arts program; i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing.

How can the teacher most effectively ascertain the level of ability and the nature of the ability of each pupil in his/her classroom? One way is through the use of formal tests. Testing a child will yield a description of his ability to understand language but not necessarily give information on how well the child is able to use the language. To determine this, the

teacher needs to hear the child use his language and express ideas in his own words. This would give the teacher information about: (1) words he can use; (2) concepts he attaches to them; (3) ways he puts words together; (4) kinds of ideas he expresses; and (5) how successfully he expresses himself. Without some sort of structure, it is difficult for even the most experienced teacher to sort out these specific aspects of language skill so that a pattern of strengths and weaknesses emerges which points the direction for instructional strategies to be used in further developing each child's language power.

Marion Monroe has devised a plan which provides a systematic and simple means of recording, describing, analyzing, and rating language behavior. She developed four scales to classify oral language skills as follows:

Expressive Language Skills

(1) How a child thinks, as revealed by the quality of his ideas.

(2) How a child thinks, as revealed by the nature of his definition of words.

(3) How a child uses words, as revealed by his ability to verbalize ideas.

(4) How a child uses words, as revealed by his command of sentence structure.

Each of these scales has five levels ranging from Level 1, the lowest, up to Level 5, the highest.

The first two scales are concerned with discovering how a child thinks through inference from two aspects of expressive language: quality of the child's ideas and the way the child defines words.

Quality of ideas is often judged on the basis of use of the language,

i.e., language structure such as sentence patterns. Language structure varies with the environmental background and maturity of the child and may not be an accurate indication of the level of the child's thinking. Quality of ideas in the Monroe Scales refers to utilizing concrete versus abstract concepts, noting relationships, generalizing out from one's contextual background, being aware of cause and effect or of time sequence. Defining words is difficult for many adults as well as children. It requires classifying and describing from an experiential background of abstract thinking. (See Appendix A for the Monroe Scales on Quality of Ideas and Definition of Words.)

The last two scales are concerned with a child's use of the language. Children from a middle to upper class background, with educated parents, books in the home, on-going communication to and with the child will express themselves in a relatively mature form. Children from less sophisticated "language" oriented backgrounds may have little contact with written or spoken language and know relatively few words or means of expressing ideas they may have.

Ability to verbalize ideas depends upon the number and variety of words the child knows, his skill in putting words together in a variety of sentence structures, his skill in tailoring his verbal output to the requirements of what he wants to say and the resulting feelings of mastery and self confidence in his ability to produce and control his language environment.

Most children in any culture or environ have mastered the basic structures of their language by the age of six. Regardless of level of intelligence or potential language ability, the child's functional language structures will

not be basically different from the language he has been hearing in his surroundings. The language a child uses when he comes to school is a reflection of this language usage in his home and community. This will vary according to socioeconomic, ethnic, linguistic group characteristics and geographical location. Where the child's language is the language of the school he will be more likely to find success in school tasks such as learning to read. (See Appendix A for the Monroe Scales on Ability to Verbalize Ideas and Mastery of Sentence Structure.)

To make use of these scales, it is suggested that the teacher chart each child's current oral language production on the four scales. Specific instructional strategies can then be devised to work with children individually or in small groups based on their pattern of strengths and weaknesses. (See Appendix B.) For some ideas and activities in oral language that will encourage children to expand their vocabulary and share their knowledge the following activities might be utilized:

1. Put various objects in a box or bag. A child picks one object and describes it to the class. The class tries to guess what the object is.

2. Start with a two word sentence (Sam laughed.) Children add a word to the beginning or to the end to lengthen the sentence. (Crazy Sam laughed. Crazy Sam laughed loudly.)

3. Ask children to pretend they are strangers. They should ask other children for directions, "Where is the library?" "How do we eat lunch?"

4. Whisper a question to one child. The child answers the question in a complete sentence. The rest of the class tries to guess what the question was.

5. When handing out a worksheet, ask the children <u>not</u> to read the instructions. Have them look at the sheet and try to figure out what they will have to do. Discuss what gave them their clues.

6. Discuss how you would feel if.....
   You had a hamburger for lunch.
   You couldn't use your hands.
   You fell down.

7. Show a short cartoon or film without the sound. Show it a second time and let a child fill in the conversation.

8. Bring in interesting articles or stories to read and discuss with the children.

9. Have pictures, signs, and displays in the classroom to stimulate conversation.

10. Conversation Breaks. Once or twice a day provide some time for the children to gather in small groups to talk to each other. Bring in a picture of something unfamiliar to the children. Discuss what it might be and how it is used.

    After children have discussed a picture make it a "living picture." Children may assume the parts of the characters. Children should act out what might happen next or what happened before. Discuss what the children are doing, why they are doing it, and how they feel.

11. When starting a new activity or project children should discuss what they are going to do, why they are doing it, how long it will take, and what they might learn.

12. Make lists that fit different categories (zoo, farm, ocean, furniture, school, bedroom, living room, doctor's office).

13. Show pictures of people doing various things (crying, running, reading, laughing). Child should choose one picture and tell these things:

    a. What he sees in the picture
    b. What is happening
    c. Why the event is occurring
    d. What is going to happen next
    e. What he thinks of the picture

14. Put the pictures together and ask one child to select a picture. The class should guess which picture was selected.

15. Compare ideas. Start with simple comparisons: dog and cat; milk and water; running and walking; house and

school. Then build up to more difficult comparisons: book and TV; horse and potato.

16. Divide the children into two teams. The teacher asks the first team a question, "Where was Jack going?" A team gets a point if answers are given in a sentence using the verb, 'going': "Jack was going to school."

17. Put a "mystery word" on the back of one child. The class gives these clues and the child tries to guess his "mystery word."

    a. Classification
    b. Description
    c. Use
    d. Spelling

18. Divide children into groups of three or four. Give each group a bag with several objects in it. The group makes up a story using the objects.

APPENDIX A & B removed due to copyright restrictions. Monroe, Marion and Rogers, Bernice, Foundations For Reading: Informal Pre-Reading Procedures, Glendale, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Company, 1964. pp. 28-39.